



U.S. EMBASSY - BAGHDAD

## 2008 Provincial Reconstruction Team News

### -Rx for Iraq: American Engagement with Medical Community-

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**Samawa, Iraq** - U.S. Army doctor Colonel Thomas Dove made history March 4th as the first American physician to address his medical counterparts at Samawa Hospital in the capital city of Muthanna province.

The topic of his lecture to the 30 Iraqi physicians was: "Managing Heart Attack Patients" and according to hospital director Dr. Khalid Kharnoub it was the first time an American had come to address his staff. "We welcome the opportunity to exchange ideas," Dr. Khalid said.



Dr. Thomas Dove interacting with fellows physicians at Samawa Hospital.

COL Dove ("Doc Dove" as the troops in his unit prefer to call him) has spent more than twenty-five years devoted to the practice of medicine; from a residency at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center to Chief of Cardiology at Tripler Army Medical Center in Hawaii to his current position as the Chief of the Division of Medicine at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany where many Coalition Forces casualties are sent for medical treatment.

According to Doc Dove, nothing quite prepared him for what to expect in Samawa.

"This is probably the most nervous I've been before giving a lecture in my life," he confided during the two-hour trip from Camp Adder, his military home near Nasiriyah in Dhi Qar province, to Samawa just across the Euphrates River in Muthanna province. "Will they respond to my interactive style of delivering a lecture? Will I be able to connect with these local docs?" he mused.

After a warm welcome by Dr. Khalid, Doc Dove was led to a small lecture room on the third floor adjacent to the cardiology ward where every seat was filled. Dr. Dove began his PowerPoint lecture slowly, asking several times if he was speaking too fast and if the folks in the audience could understand him. But he soon hit his stride, and the doctors in attendance were eager to engage with him in advanced medical English that speaks to their years of training. The session included a hands-on practical examination of four patients from the hospital's cardiology ward.

Doc Dove brought more than ideas with him to Samawa Hospital. He supplemented the hospital's medical library with a variety of the most recent editions of the Sabiston Textbook of Surgery and Harrison's Principles of Internal Medicine. He also convinced Heartbeat International, a nonprofit organization that provides medical equipment to poor people worldwide, to donate a Medtronic pacemaker device. Dr. Wadah, the chief of internal medicine at Samawa Hospital, graciously received this humanitarian gift on behalf of the hospital with an overflowing smile.

Building upon Dove's success in Samawa, the Muthanna Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) arranged a follow-on day of medical presentations on March 5th. Five of the most senior doctors from the hospital, including two surgeons, a cardiologist, and two general practitioners, traveled to Camp Adder for a seminar designed just for them. Doc Dove introduced two of his colleagues, U.S. Army Reserve doctors Major Donald Kosiak and Major Mike Revelle, who led the discussions. Topics on the agenda included "neurological evaluation" and "obstetrical emergencies."

The doctors took a lunchtime break with a selection of cheese and veggie pizzas—a "once in a lifetime experience" according to Dr. Hassan Al-Daghir, the lead cardiologist at Samawa Hospital. (One can only imagine what any cardiologist—Iraqi or American—thinks of a greasy slice of American pizza.)

The highlight of the afternoon session was a digital video conference (DVC) with Dr. Jamil Bayram, a prominent Lebanese-American Emergency Room (ER) doctor based at the Rush University Medical Center in Chicago. The DVC was made possible through the support of the Cultural Affairs Office in the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad and the International Information Programs (IIP) office of the State Department in Washington, DC.

Conversation flowed easily in Arabic for the hour-long session, and the doctors from Samawa Hospital were visibly engaged in the discussion with frequent laughter, robust arm gestures, and a spirit of camaraderie as if this group had been friends for twenty years instead of twenty minutes.